



WEATHERIZATION

Making homes of low-income people more livable and affordable

Background

Affordable housing is defined as a home that takes no more than 30 percent of the household's income for rent/mortgage and utilities. Many low-income families in Washington pay more than 25 percent of their income for home energy costs alone. Utilities and rent can take up to 60 percent of their income. One way to make low-income housing more affordable is to weatherize the homes.

Services

Weatherization is the application of energy efficiency measures to a home. Measures include: ceiling, wall, floor and duct insulation; infiltration measures (to close gaps through which the home's heat can escape), such as caulking, weather-stripping and broken window replacement; and heating system efficiency modifications. All this is done according to established technical specifications and applicable building codes.

CTED contracts with a statewide network of 26 local agencies that do weatherization and consumer energy conservation education.

CTED manages four different low-income weatherization programs:

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services--Low-income Home Energy Assistance Program
- U.S. Department of Energy--Weatherization Assistance Program
- Bonneville Power Administration - Weatherization Assistance Program
- Energy Matchmakers

Each program has its own rules, fiscal year and funding limitations. Following the guidance of the Northwest Power Planning Council, CTED promotes combining funding so that all cost-effective measures are installed in a home.

Benefits

Energy cost savings and a more comfortable living environment are the major benefits for the low-income family. But everyone benefits from weatherization because it:

- Improves the local and state economy by creating jobs and supporting business through the purchase of weatherization materials. Every weatherization dollar spent adds three dollars to the local economy, and every one million dollars spent on weatherization creates or sustains an estimated 70 jobs.
- Reduces the need for homelessness support services by making energy, a major cost of housing, more affordable.

- Lowers future costs of energy by conserving energy, thereby reducing the need to create new energy generation sources.
- Preserves low-income housing.

Results

Over 85,000 low-income occupied homes in Washington have received weatherization services with resulting energy savings, on average, between 20 and 30 percent.

Weatherization is also used in combination with other housing rehabilitation programs.

During the 1999-2001 Biennium, the combined weatherization programs added an estimated \$110 million to the state's local economies and created or sustained over 2,800 jobs.

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